

# PRACTICAL POINTS ON PRIVATE NURSING

IN CHARGE OF  
ISABEL MCISAAC

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## THE VALUE OF GENERAL READING FOR PRIVATE DUTY NURSES

By EDITH A. DRAPER

SOME months ago, when talking with "one who spake with authority," I was told that it was seldom one met with private duty nurses who were really happy in their work; that, indeed, it was exceptional to find one who had been engaged in private nursing for six years or more who was not discontented with her life, and this even amongst those who were extremely successful. There are not many nowadays who delude themselves with the idea that they have adopted the profession of nursing purely from a love of it. No, honestly speaking, the love is quite a secondary matter, with rare exceptions. This is scarcely to be wondered at; they are the favored ones of the earth who are enabled to follow the life they love best. But those who, from a sense of duty or necessity, take up a work not wholly congenial, and earnestly, day by day, fulfil the duties they have undertaken, deserve to earn for themselves a contented mind, at least. I am not prepared to discuss the whys and wherefores of their discontent, but only to suggest a palliative, as it were, a something which may make the road a little more attractive to those who find life's journey a hard and toilsome way.

Of all nursing, the most exacting is that undertaken by the private nurse. How all-absorbing it is! How bound over, body and soul, for the time being is every nurse when she undertakes the care of a patient! All her energies and faculties are concentrated on one object to the exclusion of every other. It is a lonely life; it is a hard life; one is often tempted to describe it in Mr. Mantalini's expressive if not choice language as "a demnition grind."

It has its compensations, true; it comfortably supplies the bodily wants, and it cultivates those cardinal virtues which are considered essential for graduation unto the ranks of the elect; but in no other walk of life is there a truer need for a refuge to flee to from trials and tribulations than in the noble calling of the nurse.

It is probable, though, that the majority of nurses engaged in private work do not have sufficient recreation for mind as well as body. They are, to use a homely metaphor, walking in a narrow, beaten track, hastening to the goal in view without stopping to enjoy the wonders by the wayside,—a proper but prosaic path,—and they gain what they seek, but also what they do not seek,—that is, narrow views of life, limited ideas, and faculties rusted for want of use.

The modern nurse applies with practical sense the laws of hygiene to herself as well as to her patient, and I think it can no longer be affirmed that nurses are short-lived, or that after ten years of service they are fitted only to be laid on the shelf. But has she learnt to appreciate as fully the advantages of recreation? "There is a time for all things," says King Solomon, "a time for work and a time for play." Does the real necessity for the latter part of the wise king's advice appeal to her as forcibly as it should?

There are sad enough incidents on record amongst us which perhaps had never been recorded had the wise maxim been followed in its entirety. Recreation in some form or another is absolutely necessary,—I was going to say to her salvation, but at least to her well-being,—and the nurse who works the year around with little or no holiday for mind or body is developing her powers of endurance and patience at the expense of other faculties just as ennobling, and is burying in a napkin talents bestowed upon her for use which, if cultivated, would increase her usefulness and happiness in this world and fit her to enjoy more thoroughly the wonders of the next.

Of all the varieties of recreation I only want to mention one, and that one attainable by all. Where can escape from the trivial vexations of life be found more readily than in books? The pleasure and profit to be derived from reading can be enjoyed by nurses more easily than any other form of recreation. Books are cheap, books are plentiful, and in reading is to be found a panacea for many ills.

The commodity most precious to nurses, because of its scarcity, is time, but a startling amount may be accomplished with odds and ends of time if used discerningly. Some of the world's greatest men have accumulated their stores of knowledge in the moments snatched from toil.

Profitable reading tends to culture, and Carlyle defines culture as "that process by which a man becomes all that he is created capable of being," and we are created capable of enjoying the lovely things of this world. It is our right, our heritage, and we should treasure the gift and not, like Esau of old, sell our birthright for a mess of pottage.

So much loveliness is missed and pleasure modified by inability to

appreciate. Paintings and sculpture, for instance, lose much of their charm if the subject is not understood. The advantages of travel are certainly reduced one-half to those who are unacquainted with anything of the history of the country visited.

To suggest to nurses what they should read is a task beyond me. Everyone will be guided by her individual tastes. Those who feel that life is too short to tussle with solid literature or so-called dry books would do well to remember that habits may be contracted, both good and bad, and it is not more difficult to form a habit for reading than it is to contract a habit for taking drugs.

The scanning of magazines and newspapers in order to be *au fait* with the events of the day is a very superficial form of reading, and though better than none at all, is not lasting and will endure but for a season.

If one made an earnest study of the Bible, looking up the history of all the nations alluded to, such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks, one would become well-educated in ancient history almost before one was aware of it, and a knowledge of the mighty past is the sure foundation for all reading. With that to build upon one may rest assured one's house is founded upon a rock.

We shall not benefit much by reading books which weary us or which are beyond our comprehension, but there is so much to choose from, the supply being almost limitless, that each one may suit herself. History, biography, travel, poetry, turn where we will we must be satisfied. The difficulty lies in the profusion. Again, as to how we should read: Most authorities advise reading a book studiously, conning carefully every word. Emerson says, "If a book is worth reading once, it is worth reading twice, and if it will stand a second reading, it may stand a third."

There certainly are books which we would do well "to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," and again there are many of which only certain portions are worth attentive study. The great charm of desultory reading need not be overlooked. Whichever way, there is the tree of knowledge; gather the fruit how we will, instead of being turned out of Paradise for so doing, we are but knocking at the gates, which sooner or later will open and let us in. Those who can would do well to profit by the University Extension Course of lectures, now held in almost every city. Half a loaf is better than no bread, and even a few such lectures attentively followed with notes taken would prove some nourishment to a starving mind.

Reading-clubs afford a stimulus to many who otherwise would not read at all; but there again the private nurse cannot attend with any regularity. The difficulties to overcome are troublesome, but the com-

pensation would amply repay. Many lists of one hundred "best books" have been printed, and it would help anyone to take such a list and make selections from it. I do not, of course, say that to develop a taste for reading, or to cultivate a taste already possessed will drive out dull care and discontent; neither do I presume that the reason thereof is attributable to a want of reading,—that would be manifestly absurd; but this I do know, that "He that loveth a book will never want a faithful friend, a wholesome counsellor, a cheerful companion, an effectual comforter. By study, by reading, by thinking, one may innocently divert and pleasantly entertain oneself, as in all weathers so in all fortunes."

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## MEANS USED FOR THE REDUCTION OF TEMPERATURE IN FEBRILE CASES

By SARA M. DICK

HYDROPATHY as a remedial agent in the treatment of pyrexia is a now universally acknowledged powerful factor and valuable therapeutic remedy. Although advocated by Currie, of Liverpool, in 1788 and in a measure practised, it did not gain much favor until strongly advocated by Brand, of Berlin, between 1860 and 1870, since when the virtues of water as a curative agent have been more fully developed.

The most commonly employed methods, the effect of which in general is produced by evaporation, are, first, sponging; second, packing; third, tubbing; fourth, sprinkling, or affusion; fifth, cold enemata.

### THE SPONGE-BATH.

The sponge-bath is an old and generally applied remedy. Its effect is stimulating, soothing to the nervous system, and tends to produce sleep. To discuss so trite a subject as the manner of giving a sponge-bath would seem to the graduate nurse of recent years an unnecessary proceeding, as may, indeed, the dwelling on some of the other modes spoken of; but, again, some helpful hint may reach the nurse of earlier times.

### PACKING.

The wet pack is one of the most practical ways of using water in the treatment of febrile cases. It is less heroic than tubbing, and consequently preferable in cases where the shock of the latter treatment is feared. A long rubber sheet or oil-cloth is first put on the bed, then a